

YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS IN WALES

SUMMARY REPORT, APRIL 2015

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

Arad Research was commissioned to review youth work in schools in Wales and to identify examples of good practice. This summary report provides an overview of the findings including current strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats for youth work provision in schools across Wales.

The study involved desk research; interviews with local authorities' principal youth officers or their equivalents and additional members of youth service teams, interviews with voluntary organisations and the collation of case study material.

A full research report with case studies of good practice is also available.

BENEFITS AND IMPACT OF YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS

Youth work in schools is successfully delivering a range of benefits for young people, schools and communities in Wales. It is adding value to the statutory curriculum and is contributing to the increased attainment and attendance levels and to addressing issues relating to the participation of young people in Education, Employment or Training (EET).

The report provides evidence of benefits to young people, to schools and staff and to the wider community. For example, youth work in schools is supporting the statutory curriculum and enriching it through a focus on young people's aspirations and needs.

Participating in youth work has contributed to improving young people's soft and academic skills set. It has enhanced their engagement with education and the wider community, and enabled them to access other forms of support and progression routes. Furthermore the research found the following benefits:

Benefits to young people:

- Improving their soft and academic skills;
- Raising their aspirations and engagement with education;
- Increasing their chances of staying in education, employment or training;
- Enabling them to access other qualifications, progression routes and support.

Benefits to schools and staff:

- Improves attainment and attendance levels;
- Reduces disruptions in the classroom;
- Youth workers can bring quality, up to date resources to schools and help improve teachers' knowledge.

Benefits to the community:

- An increase in young people's engagement with community youth work;
- Developing better partnerships between schools, youth groups and local community groups.

Box 1: Case studies

The full report presents case studies to illustrate school-based youth work and its benefits in practice.

- 1: A gender based project, Wrexham Youth Service
- 2: The Filter, Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) Wales Cymru
- 3: Infant Care Simulation Doll in Practice – The Baby Project Conwy Youth Service
- 4: Alternative curriculum, Pembrokeshire
- 5: Red Cross
- 6: School linking programme, Discovery Student Volunteering, Swansea University
- 7: The 'Think' project, Ethnic Youth Support Trust (EYST) Swansea
- 8: Transition into Employment, Merthyr Tydfil Local Authority

Schools engaged in youth work reported improved attainment and attendance levels and a reduction of disruptions in the classroom alongside an opportunity for teachers to develop new skills.

It is important, however, that the delivery of youth work fits in with the school agenda in order to allow these benefits to be achieved. The promotion of the potential impact of youth work in schools is therefore essential in securing and maintaining positive perceptions of youth work.

'The relationship between youth workers and young people is the real strength of youth work in schools – these kids look at youth workers in a different way to teachers and careers advisors. They relate to them.'

Local authority principal youth officer

NATURE OF YOUTH WORK PROVISION IN SCHOOLS

Young people in Wales engage with a wide variety of activities through the provision of youth work in schools. Youth work in schools is delivered by local authorities and voluntary organisations working both independently and in partnership (a sample of the type of projects and activities is listed in box 2 below and in the annex).

Box 2: Examples of activities and projects (further details in full report and in the annex)

- 1: Accreditation (e.g. Essential Skills and Behaviour and Personal Health)
- 2: Alternative curriculum
- 3: Duke of Edinburgh Award
- 4: Topic-based projects, e.g. health, bullying, relationships
- 5: Holiday provision linked to term time activities
- 6: Mentoring
- 7: Projects focused on young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)
- 8: Supporting and delivering Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- 9: Transition work

There is a strong focus from all local authorities and voluntary organisations on designing bespoke services that suit the support needs of young people and link to their interests and aspirations. The voluntary engagement of young people is a key factor in youth work in school's delivery, sustainability and positive impact.

Projects delivered cater primarily to the needs and interests of the young people involved as well as the school and the community.

'The relationship between youth workers and young people is the real strength of youth work in schools – these kids look at youth workers in a different way to teachers and careers advisors. They relate to them.'

Local authority principal youth officer

FUNDING AND STAFFING

A wide range of funding structures and sources are in place to support the delivery of youth work in schools across Wales.

Core funding from the Welsh Government to local authorities is supplemented by a range of additional funding sources such as Families First, Communities First, European funding for specific youth work in schools projects, funding to voluntary organisations to deliver, and funding from some schools.

Local authorities reported a wide range of staffing arrangements for their youth work in schools activities including full time and temporary youth workers, and specialist

staffing arrangements where required. The number of workers delivering youth work in schools varied considerably. In many cases pressures on local authorities' budgets have impacted upon staff numbers in local authorities and many are currently reviewing what can be provided in the future.

There is a contrasting approach to local authorities asking for contributions from schools for the provision of youth services. Some (but not all) local authorities reported a drop in demand for youth services in schools when schools were charged for them.

Some local authorities considered that the Welsh Government should provide more formal direction for schools to spend the Pupil Deprivation Grant on youth services.

'The reliance on grants – and the timescales and targets of those grants – can impact on the sustainability of provision.'

Voluntary organisation

MONITORING OF PROJECTS

The level of monitoring of youth work and the frequency of reporting and meetings between youth workers and school staff vary across Wales. A range of approaches exist across Wales to monitor and assess the engagement of young people in activities, and the impact delivered by youth work in schools projects.

Examples include analysing attendance records, improvements in attainment, and distance travelled according to self-efficacy questionnaires, accreditations awarded, destination data, general reports regarding attitude towards school, and case studies collected.

It was reported that it is difficult to capture the impact of the softer or social skills along with impact to a young person's aspirations, which may not become evident until leaving formal education.

Local authorities considered that there is potential to introduce one system for all schools to allow for the sharing, recording and managing of monitoring information.

'We make a contribution to improved attendance and attainment. We play a key role in working with families, ensuring an embedded approach and more cohesion. We provide a positive challenge for vulnerable young people and make a critical contribution to their soft skills and emotional intelligence.'

Local authority principal youth officer

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

Close partnerships between youth services, schools, voluntary organisations and community groups are helping young people make a positive contribution to their communities.

The links between schools and the youth services and voluntary organisations are strongest when they are well-established and trust has been developed between key individuals.

Youth services have to approach each school on an individual basis and cannot offer a 'one size fits all' approach.

Challenges remain in developing and sustaining partnerships and ensuring the positive messages relating to youth work filter down to schools. Financial continuity is therefore key so that there is a coherent approach and consistency to what is being offered to the young people.

'The quality of the youth workers is important – creating good relationships with young people is essential to deliver positive outcomes.'

Local authority principal youth officer

BARRIERS TO YOUTH WORK IN SCHOOLS

The main barriers to the delivery of youth work in schools are:

Funding

- Local authorities are experiencing funding cuts which is reducing the youth services' capacity to deliver provision.
- Challenges in securing funding means that youth services cannot make strategic longer term plans for the delivery of provision.

Perceptions of youth work

- A lack of knowledge of what youth work in school entails can lead to negative perceptions. Negative perceptions can also lead to unrealistic expectations of youth work and youth services are regularly required to 'prove their worth' and promote the benefits of youth work.

Schools' priorities

- Pressures on schools to perform academically means schools are more focused on hard outcomes (e.g. attainment and qualifications).

'It's quite hard to break into what is already a very full curriculum at times and provide alternative provision.'

Local authority principal youth officer

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS

Youth work in schools is successfully delivering a range of benefits for young people, schools and communities in Wales. Particular benefits for young people include developing young people's soft and academic skillset and increasing their chances of staying in education, employment or training.

Benefits for schools include improved attainment and attendance levels while benefits to the community include better partnerships between schools, youth groups and local community groups.

The ethos of voluntary engagement links services to young people's needs and aspirations while successful partnerships based on trust have developed between youth services, the voluntary sector and schools.

Challenges remain in developing and sustaining partnerships between local authorities, voluntary organisations and schools and ensuring that positive messages relating to youth work filter down to schools.

Financial stability, more coherent and effective monitoring, and better networking and promotion of youth services are therefore all challenges to be faced in ensuring that youth work in schools retains its capacity to deliver benefits for young people across Wales.

The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for youth work provision are presented on the following page.

Strengths

- Wide variety of activities provided across Wales based on individual need;
- An alternative and complementary approach adding value to formal education;
- Youth work in schools improves both soft and academic skills;
- Supportive environment enhances engagement with education and raises aspirations;
- Helps to reduce numbers of young people NEET;
- Access to other support and qualifications is possible as result of youth work in schools;
- Attainment and attendance levels improve;
- Classroom disruption decreases.
- Youth workers bring up to date resources to schools and help improve teachers' knowledge;
- There can be an increase in young people's engagement with community youth work.

Weaknesses

- Lack of knowledge of youth work can lead to negative perceptions;
- There are sometimes unrealistic expectations of youth work;
- Funding cuts leading to lack of strategic planning and sustainability;
- Some local authorities reported a drop in demand for youth services in schools when schools were charged;
- Lack of consistency and coherence in monitoring can limit promotion of youth work;
- Level and type of monitoring of youth work, and frequency of reporting and meetings between youth workers and school staff varies;
- It is difficult to capture the impact of the softer/social skills along with impact on a young person's aspirations.

Opportunities

- Developing better partnerships between schools, youth groups and local community groups based on trust;
- Youth work needs to be linked closely with the school ethos;
- Additional promotion of the benefits of youth work in schools to maintain positive perceptions of youth work;
- Ongoing delivery by local authorities and voluntary organisations working independently and in partnership;
- Potential for the Welsh Government to provide formal direction for schools to spend the Pupil Deprivation Grant on youth services;
- Potential to introduce one system for all schools to allow for the sharing, recording and managing of monitoring information.

Threats

- 'One size fits all' approach is not the answer, each school must be engaged on an individual basis;
- Local authorities are experiencing funding cuts which are reducing youth services' capacity;
- Funding issues can impact upon staff numbers;
- Challenges in securing long term funding means youth services cannot make long terms plans for the delivery of provision;
- Pressures on schools to perform academically means schools are more focused on hard outcomes;
- Challenges remain in sustaining partnerships and ensuring that the positive messages relating to youth work filter down to schools;
- Monitoring must not impact negatively on face-to-face contact.

Annex: Examples of Youth work in schools across Wales	
Local Authority	Youth work in schools – a sample of projects
Isle of Anglesey Currently there are no youth workers in schools; project work still undertaken where needed by schools. Until 2014 all schools had a youth worker (European funded)	- Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Alcohol awareness officer works with any school according to need; - Service level agreement with voluntary providers to deliver accreditations in some schools.
Blaenau Gwent All secondary schools have a full-time youth worker based in them; three of the four schools facilitate drop-in sessions.	- Attendance project – part of pre-VENT – All four schools fund three pupils each; - Lift – focuses on issues around mental health. Referrals come from the school but the project is delivered outside of the school; - Part time Welsh language worker – partnership with the Urdd – two and a half days of Urdd workers' time. This partnership also enables access to other support within the Urdd;
Bridgend Nine FTE youth workers link with all secondary schools with the allocation of days based on need.	- Changing Tracks Project for young people 11-16 who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET; - School Programme – off-site provision for pupils from any school who are at risk of disengaging. Includes a basic skills programme and variety of Accreditation delivered through Agored Cymru; - Together against Bullying (TAB) a lottery funded project providing a holistic approach involving pupils, parents, school administrators and lollipop ladies.
Caerphilly Four of the fourteen secondary schools are part of the current youth work in schools project having permanent youth workers on site.	- Accreditations - ASDANS; Agored; BTECs; - Breakfast club; - Climbing Certificate; - Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Phoenix project (one school - with the Fire Service).
Cardiff Engaged with all 22 schools across Cardiff.	- Post 16 programmes focusing on NEET reduction; - Pre 16 provision – Arts – delivered against the BTEC framework and accredited; - Transition support programme for young people through their transition from pre to post 16; - Youth mentor programme – pre 16 programme funded through Families First.
Carmarthenshire All 12 secondary schools have a full time youth lead worker and a special needs school (7-16) also has a full time youth lead worker.	- Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Film developing (this specific project was about facing fears in starting a new school); - Health and safety in the workplace; - Outdoor interventions – they have their own license to deliver outdoor activities (e.g. Kayaking);
Ceredigion Engaged two days a week in six of the seven secondary schools.	- Duke of Edinburgh Award; - First aid and extra curricula activities (e.g. golf and judo) at lunchtime or after school; - NEET through a focus on individual need - a three day half term project; - Transition project and taster sessions and summer skills residential courses as preparation for employment.

Conwy Engaged with all seven 11-18 secondary schools and the two PRUs.	- Literacy mentoring project with year 9 mentoring year 8 students. - The 'real care baby' project; - Two buses visit schools weekly, enabling break and lunchtime 'drop in' sessions; - Work with school councils, past projects include producing a DVD focusing on homophobic bullying; peer education project looking at energy drinks; an anti-racism project.
Denbighshire Engaged with all schools to a greater or lesser extent.	- Accreditation includes CoPE (Certificate of Personal Effectiveness); - One to one support - confidence building, numeracy and literacy; come from CAMHS or Youth Justice referrals. - Summer holiday work to prevent deskilling; - Workshops e.g. anti-bullying, sexual health.
Flintshire One school based youth worker and another to support when required. Other youth workers are in schools but they focus on accreditation and do not report to the Youth Service.	- Forest school; - Reality baby project.
Gwynedd No youth workers in schools. The youth and community workers have a relationship with some schools. Until 2014 there were five European-funded youth workers in schools delivering a minimum of one day a week in all secondary schools.	- Accreditations; - Duke of Edinburgh Award.
Merthyr Tydfil Four community service clusters across the local authority – one in the north, one in mid, and two in the south.	- Bullying and internet safety; - Drug Aid; - Financial inclusion in schools; - Two day supportive learning pathways course (Level 1) – about making sure young people are attending and attaining –involves planning a post 16 destination.
Monmouthshire All four comprehensive schools and the EBD have a dedicated full time youth worker.	- One to one support (referrals and drop-in); - A bespoke curriculum delivered one to one or to a small group – can include accreditations; Essential and Wider Key Skills Levels Entry-2 BTEC Work Skills Levels 1-2 and Personal and Social Development Level 1; - Get up and Grow – gardening project through which young people can gain BTECs.
Neath Port Talbot 1. The universal offer e.g. Sex and Relationships Education; 2. Teams deliver specifically targeted or funded activity e.g. Families First.	- Health and nutrition information sessions; - Involvement in school sports days; - Mobile provision e.g. lunch clubs. - Sexual health to all year 7s (impetus came from young people via the Youth Council).

Newport Youth Services work with all eight secondary schools and one college; 13 FTE posts.	- Alternative Learning Forum (ALF). A small group from the PRU unit are taken to a neutral venue; - Duke of Edinburgh Award including supporting and training staff to deliver; - Facilitate pastoral meetings between young people at risk and others in the community, including the police; - Work with the local college and year 11s – linked to attendance, group work and one to one sessions.
Pembrokeshire Engaged with eight mainstream secondary schools, mainly targeting Key Stage 4, one school has a full-time worker, others part time.	- BIIB – Industry led alcohol awareness qualification, for year 12, the impact of alcohol use in the community; - Drop in sessions a youth room in one school open one lunchtime a week; - Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Heart Start – youth worker qualified to deliver first aid.
Powys Youth work is delivered across all 13 schools in Powys and three special schools.	- Drop in sessions; - Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Some youth clubs delivered in the community are attached to school buildings; - Themed issues – e.g. emotional health sessions, work around bullying with a group of young people.
Rhondda Cynon Taf Engaged with all 17 secondary schools providing two full-time members of staff in each.	- Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Some schools have purpose built youth clubs in schools; - The service delivers programmes that link in with the Level 2 thresholds; - Two nights of extended open access provision is delivered from school sites all year, including school holidays.
Swansea Eight full-time youth workers supported by other specialist posts, they do not have a presence in all schools.	- Duke of Edinburgh Award; - Educating Learners in Schools (ELIS) part of the alternative curriculum; - Information services linked to PSHE, wellbeing and part of their prevention work.
Torfaen Engaged with three of the six schools; a team of 26 linked to Prevent and other ESF funded projects with their own budgets.	- Development of ASDAN qualifications; - Duke of Edinburgh Award; - KS4 BTEC ASDAN taking young people for a full day out of school to do a variety of activities; - Welsh medium sessions.
Vale of Glamorgan Engaged with all three comprehensive schools and their feeder schools.	- Emotional Intelligence; - Guidance to Engagement (G2E) Schools Project; - Students from schools are taken to the college to work with the youth worker in the college; - Sexual health project.
Wrexham Engaged with eight of the nine secondary schools.	- Curriculum based KS4 referral programme aimed at reducing exclusion; - Info shop includes sexual health (outreach from this goes into schools); - Interchange – drug and alcohol; - Recording studio.

